

Article

Researching Cultural Objects and Manuscripts in a Small Country: The Finnish Experience of Raising Awareness of Art Crime

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Abstract: In this article we shed light on the position of Finland in conversations on the movement of unprovenanced cultural objects, within the national, the Nordic and the global contexts. Finland’s geopolitical position, as a “hard border” of the European Union neighbouring the Russian Federation, and its current legislative provisions, which do not include import regulations, mean that it has the potential to be significant in understanding the movement of cultural property at transnational levels. In particular, we outline a recent initiative started at the University of Helsinki to kick-start a national debate on ethical working with cultural objects and manuscripts. We analyse exploratory research on current awareness and opinion within Finland, and summarize our current work to produce robust research ethics to guide scholars working in Finland. Although Finland has a small population and is usually absent from international discussions on the illicit movement of cultural property (save a few exceptions), we argue that it is still possible—and important—for scholars and others in Finland to affect policy and attitudes concerning art crime, provenance, and the role of stakeholders such as decision-makers, traders and the academy.

Keywords: Finland; Nordic; cultural objects; manuscripts; research ethics; import regulations; export regulations; cultural heritage

1. Introduction

The vulnerability of cultural objects—from fine art to ancient manuscripts, to archaeological artefacts and antiquities—to theft, smuggling and illegal trade, is known and documented globally, as is the ongoing debate around the ethics of collecting and working with such material. For a long time, however, the position of the Nordic countries with regard to unprovenanced and possibly looted or smuggled cultural objects and manuscripts has been one of relative ambivalence. Some individual scholars working in the Nordic region have discussed the trade in particular categories of cultural objects, although this research has not always had a specific focus on the Nordic region itself (e.g., [Nørskov 2002](#)). A focus on the role of the region, as both a consumer and a source of cultural material, has been patchy at best.

There are a few notable exceptions to this gap in knowledge, and perhaps the most well-known theme of illicit antiquities debate in the Nordic region is the controversy surrounding Norwegian collector Martin Schøyen. Specializing in collecting artefacts and manuscripts from countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan, Schøyen’s collecting activities were the subject of a television documentary

(Flyum and Hebditch 2004). This documentary also highlighted the role of “naive scholars” in legitimizing such collections (Lundén 2005, p. 3), which has been discussed at least to some extent within the Nordic context in Sweden (Lundén 2004).

In 2006, a study was published that spanned the Nordic region of Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Norway, spearheaded and coordinated by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, Information and Publication (*Brottsförebyggande rådet*) (Korsell et al. 2006). This groundbreaking study aimed to establish baseline data concerning a wide range of “heritage crimes”, not just those related to illegal import, export and looting. Thus it included such issues as theft from museums and antiques stores, deliberate destruction such as arson, as well as illegal excavation and salvage (concerning underwater heritage). With regard to the illegal movement of cultural objects, the report noted that legislation needed to be tightened, and that at times it was uncertain within Nordic countries and their policies which objects originating from these countries should be protected (Korsell et al. 2006, p. 173). The study also paid less attention to and had less to say about illegal import, noting that this would require an approach outside of the scope of the regional study, including also source and transit countries (Korsell et al. 2006, p. 10). As we note below, it is also especially difficult to measure the scale or impact of import in Finland in particular, due to a current lack of import regulation for cultural objects, moving the responsibility for checking and enforcing instead to the object’s point of export elsewhere.

Another collaborative project, involving specialists and decision-makers from Norway and Poland, was the “Stop Heritage Crime” project. The report that resulted from this project (Ramskjær et al. 2011) dealt with themes from cultural heritage legislation, to how to respond to international cultural heritage crises caused by armed conflict and other catastrophes, but also acknowledged the role of Nordic-based collectors such as Schøyen (e.g., Koliński 2011). Of particular note is the work of the Norwegian police to increase awareness among the public but also within the police service itself concerning cultural heritage crime (Wennberg 2011).

In this article we focus on the position of Finland specifically, and especially of academic research taking place within Finnish institutions, within the global context of attempts to regulate and even curtail the illicit trade in cultural property. The paper stems from our experiences as part of a research collective that organized and delivered an international symposium on the theme “Working with Cultural Objects and Manuscripts”, and the related research activities that we have since initiated in Finland.

2. Cultural Object Protection in Finland

The legal situation in Finland with regard to the trafficking of cultural objects is somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, Finland has ratified and brought into force in 1999 two key legislative tools for tracking international trafficking in illicit objects: the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, and the Unidroit 1995 Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects. The export of cultural objects is now controlled by the Act on Restrictions to the Export of Cultural Objects (2016/933), which entered into force in 2017. The Finnish Heritage Agency (*Museovirasto* in Finnish, known in English until 2017 as the National Board of Antiquities) is the central licensing authority, but the Finnish National Gallery and the Military Museum also issue national export licences according to their fields of expertise. The Act protects and preserves cultural heritage artefacts deemed to be national treasures of Finland by restricting the export of scientifically, artistically and historically valuable cultural objects. In addition to the Act, the European Council Regulation on the Export of Cultural Goods (116/2009), and the European Commission’s implementing regulation (1081/2012) apply to the export of cultural objects to countries outside the European Union. Yet at the same time, Finland does not have any import regulations with regard to cultural objects, and those commodities simply passing through Finland are not in need of an export license (Paukkula and Sihvo 2003, p. 108). In an interview conducted with representatives of the Finnish police, they observed that “it was highly

unlikely that export paperwork would even be required for cultural objects that were simply passing through Finland” (Thomas 2015, p. 139).

While the lack of any import regulation is not such an unusual phenomenon in different national jurisdictions (see, e.g., Burnham 1975, p. 93), in the case of Finland it can be seen as being of considerable transnational concern. Most notably, this is due to Finland’s particular political–geographical location. Spanning over 1,300 km, Finland’s eastern border is the longest land border of any member state of the European Union (EU) with a “third” country (in this case the Russian Federation). As Maaperä (2017, p. 49) notes, “this means that Finland must go beyond controlling its own export of cultural objects and also take responsibility for cultural objects exported from the other EU member states.” Moreover, with no import regulations in place, this means that once any cultural object is in Finland it can easily be transported to other countries in the Schengen zone.

This long “hard border” with a non-EU territory is particularly pertinent because Russia’s border space with Finland has been associated in the general media with “undesirable elements, with smuggling, organized crime and the control of alcohol flows” (Paasi 1999, p. 673), while at the same time the cross-border region has been important for trade and local economies (see, e.g., Smętkowski et al. 2016). The role of Russian import and export of cultural objects also loomed large in Thomas’s (2015) study of the movement of cultural objects in and through Finland. Bogdanova (2011, p. 96), moreover, has noted a growing art and antiques market in Russia from the 1990s onwards. For 2017, as Maaperä (2017, p. 49) wrote, “The National Board of Antiquities has observed a significant rise in transit volume this year. Along the eastern border, the Finnish customs has stopped dozens of long-distance lorries loaded with antiquities lacking the appropriate export permits”. In short, Finland’s important role as a “hard border” nation of the European Union and its lack of import regulation for cultural objects form a particular area of concern.

This concern is more stringent especially because the movement of cultural objects in and through Finland remains under-researched and under-recorded. There has been at least some debate about other crimes that may inadvertently affect cultural heritage in Finland (see, e.g., Laulumaa 2014 for a demonstration of unauthorized forestry work as a form of heritage crime), but aside from a pilot study carried out a few years ago by one of the authors (Thomas 2015, 2016), and Finland’s participation in the Cultural Heritage Crime study (Korsell et al. 2006), little effort has been made to understand the extent of potential or actual involvement in the illicit or illegal movement of cultural objects that actors operating in Finland may have (however, see also Lempiäinen 2015; Wirilander 2017; Lähdesmäki 2018; Modarress-Sadeghi 2018 for connected issues on heritage protection matters in Finland). As written by Finland in a 2015 periodic report of the national implementation of the UNESCO 1970 Convention: “There are no estimates or statistics on the extent of illicit export or import of cultural objects. The police have data on thefts involving cultural objects, but it is not easy to retrieve the information from the data register concerning only cultural objects.”¹ The absence of statistics contrasts the general picture given by the Finnish Heritage Agency, who in 2017 still wrote that “Finland is not the final destination for cultural artefacts, but primarily used as a transit country for the trafficking of European cultural artefacts through Finland and out of the EU” (Maaperä 2017, p. 50).

In general, the impression is that Finland views itself as a small country that plays only a marginal role in the global antiquities trade, yet concrete numbers to back up such a statement are lacking. Moreover, as noted above, there is increased trafficking of antiquities along the Russian border, and anecdotal examples are emerging of cultural material from other countries, often with dubious or poor provenance, arriving in Finland (e.g., Hardy 2015). Finally, one of the authors recently brought a large private collection of ancient manuscript fragments of an anonymous Finnish collector to the attention of the Finnish Heritage Agency. This and other factors (including a recent terrorist attack in

¹ http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/REPORT_FINLAND.pdf (accessed on 19 February 2018).

Turku, August 2017) seem to lead to a shift in understanding among the Finnish authorities that their role as a final destination and transit country may be larger than hitherto believed.

Finland's self-understanding as a marginal player in the global antiquities trade seems, in general, to go hand-in-hand with the lack of ethical regulations regarding the use of unprovenanced cultural objects in research activities. Instead, the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (*Tutkimuseettinen neuvottelukunta* [TENK]), an advisory board appointed by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (1347/1991), focuses primarily on general research misconduct and on ethical principles with regard to human subjects.² The Archaeological Society of Finland recently published an "Ethical Principles in Archaeology" guideline (2017),³ but this guideline is mainly concerned with archaeological fieldwork in Finland and is only conformed to by its membership.

3. The "Working with Cultural Objects and Manuscripts" Project

In late 2016, a group of researchers, all then working at the University of Helsinki and with a strong interest in studying and combating the illicit antiquities trade in Finland and beyond, set up a project focusing on the role of different stakeholders in Finland in the trafficking of potentially tainted cultural objects and manuscripts.⁴ This project, "Working with Cultural Objects and Manuscripts: Provenance, Legality, and Responsible Stewardship" (WCOM), was funded in January 2017 for 12 months by the University of Helsinki's Future Fund. The aim was—and is—to generate awareness and kick-start a national debate on the topic. This was primarily done through organizing a major international symposium, "Working with Cultural Objects and Manuscripts", held 5–6 June 2017 at the National Museum of Finland in Helsinki, on the illicit trade in cultural objects and manuscripts.⁵ The symposium addressed both the global context and Finland's role and position in these markets. International and Finnish scholars, cultural heritage professionals, and legal experts were invited to speak, and the conference was promoted via local and national media outlets in Finnish, Swedish, and English. In particular, Finland's role as a major steward of the easternmost EU border (as explored above), and the small number of staff and dedicated funding available to police this border or assess cultural objects moving across it were underscored throughout the conference.

After the conclusion of the conference, our project carried out a small-scale exploratory survey targeting key stakeholders relevant to the issue of the movement of cultural objects in and through Finland. Though the survey was open to anyone who wished to respond in English, Finnish, or Swedish (see below), we aimed circulation of the survey at groups who played important parts in the networks surrounding the regulation of this trade. This included enforcement agencies, private collectors, academic researchers, members of the art and antiques trade, and museum professionals. The depth of the questions asked in the survey may have constrained the response numbers; the results from this survey will be discussed below.

The input from the international symposium and the survey data, together with informal conversations with academic colleagues, eventually helped to inform policy recommendations towards creating a code of ethics to inform scholarly interaction with cultural materials. While originally the goal was to propose them on a pan-university level, the project already quickly noticed that, due to a lack of knowledge on these issues among higher-level decision-makers, this was not immediately feasible. Moreover, the relevant ethics boards of the universities observed the principles issued by TENK. In informal conversations with committee members of TENK (largely arranged through

² <http://www.tenk.fi/en> (accessed on 19 February 2018).

³ http://www.sarks.fi/arkisto/eettiset_ohjeet.pdf (accessed on 19 February 2018).

⁴ Aside from the authors of this paper, the group consisted of Sanna Aro-Valjus (University of Helsinki) and Ulla Tervahauta (now at the University of Copenhagen).

⁵ <https://blogs.helsinki.fi/culturalobjects/> (accessed on 20 March 2018).

previous existing personal networks of the research team⁶), we noted considerable interest regarding the issues at hand. However, we also noted a lack of knowledge within the committee on the relevancy of an ethical code such as the one we were proposing. Most likely this is due to the different areas of expertise of the committee members in question, with a lack of committee members specialising in art and heritage crime. As noted above, the main focal point of TENK when it comes to ethical principles is regarding human subjects in research. We have decided, therefore, to change from a top–down strategy to a bottom–up oriented one, starting with the individual universities and departments to which the team members have affiliation in Finland, and building from there. Therefore, currently, these policy recommendations are being assessed on the level of specific faculties within the Universities of Helsinki and Turku. Two other aims of the project are (i) to develop an online toolkit resource to help stakeholders in Finland make informed decisions about the acquisition, import, and export of cultural objects, and to recognise the key role that provenance research should play in any scholarly work on privately held texts, as well as (ii) to create policy recommendations for decision-makers at the national, city, and university levels concerning import and export policies for cultural objects entering and leaving Finland. These aims are still under development, as the project team continues to work on these issues as well as actively seek more funding to develop WCOM further.

4. Survey Results

Our project team designed an open survey that was then circulated on e-mail lists and social media channels, aimed at scholars as well as other professionals involved with cultural heritage. The survey form was in English, but the responses could be written in English, Finnish or Swedish. Moreover, the survey form was designed to be fairly quick to fill in, and it assured the anonymity of the participants. Yet the number of responses remained extremely low, only 24. They included nine university professionals, three postdoctoral scholars, two PhD candidates, and five students. The other respondents were two museum employees, one conservator, one collector, and one dealer or auctioneer. The survey methodology literature recommends a high response rate (e.g., [Rodeghier 1996](#)), which we have not achieved with this survey. Estimating the true percentage of the response rate we received is also complicated by our current lack of knowledge concerning the true population of who might be considered relevant potential respondents. For example, while it would be feasible to estimate the number of scholars researching relevant subjects based on university staff websites, this might not capture additional independent and unaffiliated researchers, or undergraduate students. Furthermore, we currently have no way of verifying how many private collectors of cultural objects and manuscripts may be living in Finland. Therefore, while we acknowledge that our response numbers are low and potentially problematic, we nonetheless present the results here as a starting point in attempting to capture a snapshot of awareness and attitudes within Finland. The responses that the survey received were quite homogenous regardless of the professional background, probably because so many worked at a university. In fact, one of the respondents wrote that:

cultural property issues are a topic that only interests a very small number of people. There is some overlapping but in general these individuals can be divided into two groups: scholars and museum people on one side, collectors and dealers on the other.

In our survey, despite our efforts to reach wider audiences, “the other” side remains too little represented. This has probably affected many aspects of the survey, such as estimation of the role of Finland in the global antiquities market, which was considered low or very low. A typical response stated that:

⁶ The Finnish research environment, which is relatively small, with little hierarchy, and focused around Helsinki, probably has eased considerably the process of setting up such informal meetings with national board members. We assume that in other countries arranging such meetings might have been much more difficult.

Finland's role in global trade can only be described as minimal. We are a small nation in Europe's northern periphery without any large customer base for this kind of material. No dealership of any kind of global importance has been established here as we also lack specialist workforce as well as infrastructure.

The responses to the question asking if the respondent had come across transactions or objects that seem illegally imported into Finland, or otherwise ethically or legally dubious, were divided, with almost half positive (13) and half negative (11). Most of the written responses were repetitions of hearsay. Most concrete cases of untowardness involved art looted during World War II, along with metal-detected finds, as well as manuscript and antiques collections studied by scholars.

The question about the term "unprovenanced objects or antiquities" showed that most of the respondents knew the term (19 versus five). They had encountered the term in relation either to old museum collections or to works of art and antiquities circulating in private collections or the antiques market. Some respondents were critical of the present emphasis on provenance as key to ethical conduct:

Most North European countries have strong property laws and base their legal systems on presumption of innocence. Therefore, while younger generation collectors are generally well aware of the many ethical and legal issues related to their hobby, many older collectors find it shocking when they are treated as if they were criminals.

Almost all (22) had heard of the UNESCO 1970 convention, and only a slightly smaller number (17) knew that Finland had signed it. Written responses to the questions related to responsible stewardship toward cultural objects and materials listed adequate research licences and practices as well as documentation, conditions of preservation, conservation and storage, and not selling Finnish items of cultural importance abroad, but also broader issues like transparency, the education of the professionals and wider audiences on ethical practices, and the reliability and accessibility of information on cultural property.

The last set of questions focused on the roles of different professional groups in relation to responsible stewardship. This made apparent that a clear difference or even a gap exists between, on the one hand, the academics, heritage professionals, and officials, and on the other hand, dealers and private collectors.

The roles of researchers or academics and professionals such as archaeologists or art historians were considered in very similar terms. The respondents emphasised awareness of the provenance and care of the items studied, and duties and rights related to handling cultural property, reporting illegal or dubious activities as well as raising awareness and educating various audiences on ethical issues. There were, however, also critical voices with one stating that "academics seem to be hysterically worried about whether they can publish material lacking pre-1970 provenance".

The themes regarding the role of government officials resembled those underscored by responses concerning other roles. Responsible stewardship was said to include being aware of ethical issues, providing better resources for protection, and enforcing the laws, as well as developing general awareness. It was suggested that customs officers should be better trained to "recognize what to look for and keep an eye on". Again, there were also views that stood out from the rest:

Trade of antiquities certainly needs to be regulated but it is important to have some sort of balance. Overregulation is often counterproductive and mostly leads to even more serious problems.

The last role, that of dealers and private collectors, was also met with similar ideas, including an enlightened attitude that "rises above the lust of owning objects" or to make profit out of them, clear rejection of illegal practices, and working with provenanced objects. There was some suggestion that the three other groups of academics and heritage professionals should utilize the expertise and knowhow that the dealers and collectors have. However, there was some scepticism on how the other groups view dealers and private collections:

Most importantly, these important stakeholders shouldn't be seen as enemies. It should be obligatory to invite representatives from their organizations to all conferences that deal with these issues. [. . .] Cultural property activists are a bit too much interested in shaming collectors and museum curators. Shift of focus towards more constructive activities would certainly yield better results.

The chasm identified in the responses probably also explains why so few dealers and private collectors took part in the survey⁷. However, even for scholars, officials and heritage professionals, the response rate remains disappointingly low, perhaps partly reflecting the current lack of importance that they assign to the issues involved. As a follow-up exercise, it would be valuable to repeat this survey or a similar one in several years' time, also as a means of measuring the extent to which we have succeeded in raising awareness within Finland about these issues, as indicated by an increase in response numbers.

5. Role of Finnish Researchers

Researchers have elsewhere pointed to the involvement of scholars in facilitating the illegal trade in cultural objects, be it unintentionally through actions such as publishing (and hence legitimizing) unprovenanced material through their research activities (Brodie 2011), or even in extreme cases knowingly, for example taking money in return for providing professional opinion authentications to otherwise dubious works (Watson and Todeschini 2007). The risks are apparent to scholars engaging with cultural objects and manuscripts, as "without verifiable provenance data, it is impossible for a scholar to determine if an unprovenanced artefact is legally acquired and extremely difficult to determine from which site it came or if it is a partial or complete forgery" (Johnson 2017, p. 30). Therefore, for scholars who choose to ignore, or at least tolerate, the lack of a complete provenance⁸, this opens them to risk of accidentally skewing the academic discourse by introducing false or at least tainted information in the form of analysing forgeries. It also opens them to complicity in the illicit trade, should their publications be used by dealers and collectors to add value to their merchandise by attributing an academic publication within the object's provenance statement. As both academic articles and exhibition catalogues have been seen cited as sources in auction catalogues, this risk of perhaps well-meaning academic research being exploited to raise financial value is real.

Some scholars have even in the past gone on record to advocate in favour of allowing the trade, arguing that state and transnational attempts to control the movement in cultural property does more harm than good (e.g., Merryman 1986). In the context of Finland, there has been until now very little consideration of the role of scholars and their research—whether framed as a necessary step in advancing the field regardless of the provenance of the objects under study, or as a complicit act that in fact advances illegal activity. Finnish universities have recently begun to offer courses on ethical conduct, but discipline-specific teaching on ethics has not been substantially established yet. However, the University of Turku has organised a course titled "Archaeological Heritage Administration" since 1995, where heritage legislation and crimes, and issues like provenance and research ethics, are addressed.

Frequently the discussions focus on flagrant cases of misconduct, while ethical issues encountered in everyday conduct of scholarly work might seem so minor, even trivial that they remain unaddressed. For instance, the boom of amateur metal detecting in the 2010s (Immonen and Kinnunen 2016;

⁷ Although some respondents identified that there are no large-scale dealerships in Finland, there are nonetheless active antiques and cultural object dealers, as well as several auction houses in Helsinki and elsewhere in the country.

⁸ We refer here to complete provenance as being a provenance that includes all aspects of the object's history, including its point of origin and when it was first discovered. Commercial literature such as auction catalogues sometimes list recent owners as a "provenance", but for us this is not a complete provenance as it lacks the scientific data of the point of origin and its archaeological context that would greatly enhance its scientific value (and greatly assure against the likelihood of the object being a fake).

Wessman et al. 2016) has created situations presenting ethical problems for Finnish scholars. Although the majority of metal detectorists in Finland appear to be willing to record their finds with the relevant authorities, there are some amateurs who, against the legislation, decide once in a while to keep an ancient object they have found as a memento. They then contact an expert and ask for an identification of the object and provide an opportunity to document it for research purposes⁹. The scholar might consider it more important to do this than to notify heritage officials, knowing that otherwise the object will never reach a museum collection and the amateur would never let any scholar know about their finds again.

In addition to individual scholars recognizing ethical decisions in seemingly mundane situations, the proper treatment of ethical issues also requires institutions to have the necessary tools and procedures to identify and address ethical issues related to cultural heritage. Even quite recently, the Academy of Finland, the governmental funding body for scientific research in Finland, has financially supported research into unprovenanced cultural objects that are held in private anonymous collections and whose legitimacy is questionable. In part, this is a consequence of TENK—with which research financed by the Academy of Finland has to comply¹⁰—having no ethical restrictions for researchers regarding unprovenanced cultural objects (see above).¹¹ Aside from the major ethical concerns involved here, among which is the fact that public money is being spent on financial gain to private collections, this also hurts Finnish research in terms of reputational damage (see, e.g., Mazza 2018).

For research taking place in Finnish institutions, as anywhere else, this is an important issue. There are arguments that research would be too limited—and important data missed—if scholars restricted themselves to only researching cultural material with reliable and complete provenance. This is a particular challenge for fields such as Assyriology, where a major part of the corpus of material has scant provenance, often due to the lower standards adhered to in the past when much of the material originally came to light. While within some circles in Assyriology this still seems to be the case, more and more we see that the ethical and legal issues with the problematic provenance of much of the cuneiform corpus is brought forward and discussed (see, e.g., Waerzeggers 2015, pp. 187–88; Alstola 2018, pp. 45–48). A memorable statement by one Finnish scholar of manuscripts at the end of our June 2017 conference at the National Museum of Finland, that “the age of innocence is gone” for academic researchers, might sound naive to many readers. However, it highlights the necessity of generating this debate nationally, as well as the continuing difference of understanding between disciplines such as archaeology and cultural property law, and such research traditions as textual scholarship. This is perhaps underlined by recent controversies around the involvement of a considerable number of text researchers in studying papyrus manuscripts from the Green Collection (see Mazza 2015; Moss and Baden 2017, pp. 22–98).¹² Thus, cross-disciplinary discourse is needed in Finland, but also among many scholars internationally.

6. Next Steps

As academics, we are in a position where we are able to make recommendations to government decision-makers and others, but we also have a responsibility to our own institutions. As a first step, we have compiled a draft code of ethics for researchers working with cultural objects and

⁹ A new Academy of Finland-funded consortium project, involving the University of Helsinki, Aalto University and the Finnish Heritage Agency aims to simplify the process of reporting finds, and to share artefact data in an open source format (see <https://blogs.helsinki.fi/sualt-project/>).

¹⁰ See <http://www.aka.fi/en/funding/responsible-research/research-ethics/> (accessed on 2 March 2018).

¹¹ Another reason is the lack of understanding of the ethical issues involved in research on unprovenanced objects by the reviewers of research applications.

¹² The Green Collection consists of roughly 40,000 artefacts that are largely in the hands of the for-profit company Hobby Lobby Inc. The collection is named after its President, Mr. Steve Green, who in 2009 initiated, together with Dr. Scott Carroll, the buying of this collection. The non-profit organization Museum of the Bible, of which Mr. Green is chair, was established to eventually own and display these artefacts in Washington, D.C. The ties between both organizations remain dubious.

manuscripts. This code takes its inspiration from the Institute of Archaeology, University College London *Policy regarding the illicit trade in antiquities* (University College London 2008). At the time of writing, discussions are underway on a faculty level at the University of Helsinki and the University of Turku about introducing these new ethical recommendations. Later we hope that such guidelines would also be adopted by other Finnish universities, research councils and memory institutions, as well as implemented in the ethical principles of TENK.

Another practical step, which will begin in Autumn 2018, is a new Master's-level course at the University of Helsinki, also called "Working with Cultural Objects and Manuscripts", directed by two of the authors (Thomas and Bonnie) and made available to students of Cultural Heritage Studies, Archaeology, Assyriology and Biblical Studies. We believe this will be the first time at the University of Helsinki that a course looking at issues around provenance, illicit trade and researchers' ethical responsibilities will have run. Especially important in this regard is the inclusion of disciplines focused primarily on ancient textual sources (Biblical Studies, Assyriology), since it is in these disciplines that more and more scholars are engaging with primary-source material (papyrus manuscripts, cuneiform tablets) without knowing the legal and ethical issues connected to dealing with such cultural objects. As degree-level programmes on this theme are still relatively rare (save exceptions such as the PGCert offered by the University of Glasgow), we feel that this is a relatively straightforward but important step for raising awareness for future professionals working in Finland and elsewhere. Pending positive student feedback and evaluation, we hope to make it a regularly running course.

Although the debate around the effects of the illicit trade in cultural objects is very developed elsewhere, as we have noted already, the discussion is still a fairly new one in Finland. To build upon discussions started at the WCOM conference in June 2017 (Modarress 2017), we are in the process of publishing an open-access e-book based on the conference presentations. As part of this, we are publishing (with permission) significant articles from three of the international keynote speakers translated into Finnish (Brodie 2011; Rollston 2014; Gerstenblith 2017). Although English is understood by most Finns, having these seminal papers in the Finnish language makes them even more accessible to a Finnish audience and increases the likelihood of their content being read and taken on board by decision-makers and others whose practices or businesses might be affected. The remainder of the book is a mixture of articles either in English or Finnish, depending on the theme: we decided that chapters describing the situation in Finland are in English to raise awareness internationally, whereas chapters mostly relating to cases outside of Finland are in Finnish so as to raise awareness within Finland of examples elsewhere.

7. Conclusions

Finland is still regularly overlooked in debates around the global illicit trade in cultural objects. It is clear that the scale of illicit trade, smuggling and trafficking issues is likely much smaller than in many other parts of the world, such as known "hotspots" for looting and black market activity. However, it is also the case that a closer study of object transportation over Finland's borders and through Finland is still needed to clarify what policy or practice changes might be needed to curtail import or export of vulnerable cultural property. We have also highlighted the role of scholars, reiterating points that other researchers have made about the role of scholarly publishing and authentication in stimulating and supporting the market. This stressed the need for greater collaboration between the different scholarly disciplines working on and with cultural objects, especially with text-oriented disciplines—not only in Finland, but in the academic world at large. Although Finland is a relatively small country, both by population and in terms of its role in the international art market, we have an opportunity to contribute to the global efforts against illicit trade. Our proposals for an ethical code of conduct for researchers working in Finland, as well as our development of a course for future researchers and cultural sector workers, are important steps.

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